

Best Reads from the Past Year

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2007 has produced three wonderful Australasian story collections. Paddy O'Reilly's *The End of the World* (UQP) is laconic, imaginative and moving. Susan Midalia's *The History of the Beanbag* (UWAP) is deeply personal and honest. But the standout is NZ writer Charlotte Grimshaw's *Opportunity* (Vintage), unusually gripping for a short story collection. The echoes between stories catch the reader in a net of chilling possibilities beneath the most ordinary seeming lives. The best novel may be Gail Jones' *Sorry*, a profound and complex response to Australia's dark past. JM Coetzee's *Diary of a Bad Year* (Text) sits beguilingly on the cusp of fiction and non-fiction. In non-fiction, the *Quarterly Essay* continues with a timely analysis of the demise of John Howard, *Exit Right* (Black Inc) by Judith Brett. A glimpse of 18th century Lincolshire is provided by *Gratefull to Providence* (Lincoln Record Society), the diaries of Matthew Flinders' father. Two scorching personal memoirs, Tanya Levin's *People in Glass Houses* (Black Inc) and Rebekkah Beddoes' *Dying for a Cure* (Random House), expose the underside of Hillson and Australia's psychiatric services. And last, a practical guide to being green in the city: I admit a personal interest as the author is my sister-in-law, but *Green is Good* (HarperCollins) by environmental scientist Rebecca Blackburn explains the difference between the really constructive things we can do and the window-dressing trivia.